



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Via Email: foia@americanoversight.org

MAR 04 2019

Mr. Hart Wood
1030 15th Street, NW
Suite B256
Washington, DC 20005

RE: Freedom of Information Act Tracking Number: **19-03912-F**

Dear Mr. Wood,

This is in response of your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) dated January 28, 2019, in which you are seeking:

- All records reflecting costs reimbursed or paid directly by your agency for any reimbursable expenses attributable to any political appointee. Payments or reimbursements include any payments associated with travel (including the travel of any staff or security detail assigned to a political appointee), long-term housing, the cost of government transportation, individual airfare for government employees and/or their spouses, lodging, meals, per diem payments, rental vehicles, overtime payments, payments made via government-issued charge cards or travel cards, or any other reimbursable expenses. (Date Range for Record Search: From 12/21/2018 To 1/25/2019).

We consulted with the Office of Information Technology-IT Resource Management, Director IT Financial Management and Oversight Service (ITFMOS) and no records were located reflecting costs reimbursed or paid directly by our agency for any reimbursable expenses attributable to any political appointee. Payments or reimbursements include any payments associated with travel (including the travel of any staff or security detail assigned to a political appointee), long-term housing, the cost of government transportation, individual airfare for government employees and/or their spouses, lodging, meals, per diem payments, rental vehicles, overtime payments, payments made via government-issued charge cards or travel cards, or any other reimbursable expenses between December 21, 2018 and January 25, 2019. Therefore, this is a no records respond to your request.

You may appeal in writing to:

Department of Veterans Affairs
General Counsel (024)
810 Vermont Avenue
Washington, DC 20420

You may also submit your appeal via facsimile to (202) 273-6388 or via email to ogcfoiaappeals@va.gov. If you do appeal this determination, you must specify which part of the determination you are appealing. Please include a copy of your request and my letter with your appeal, and clearly state why you disagree with this determination. If you mail your appeal, both the front of the envelope and the letter should be clearly marked "FOIA Appeal". Please also include a daytime telephone number in case the Office of General Counsel needs additional information.

As an alternative to submitting an appeal, you may contact the VA FOIA Public Liaison, which was created to offer mediation services to resolve disputes between FOIA requesters and the VA. Using the VA FOIA Public Liaison does not affect your right to appeal.

You may contact the VA FOIA Public Liaison at:

Department of Veterans Affairs
VA FOIA Public Liaison (005R1C)
810 Vermont Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20420
Email: vacofoiaservice@va.gov
Phone: (877) 750-3642
Fax: (202) 632-7581

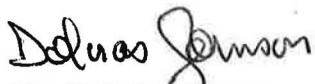
As another alternative to submitting an appeal, you may also contact the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) whom was created to offer mediation services to resolve disputes between FOIA requesters and Federal Agencies. Using OGIS does not affect your right to appeal. You may contact OGIS in any of the following manners:

Office of Government Information Services
National Archives & Records Administration
8601 Adelphi Road
College Park, MD 20740-6001
Email: ogis@nara.gov
Phone: (202) 741-5770
Toll-free: 1-877-684-6448
Fax: (202) 741-5769

This concludes the FOIA Service's response to your request.

We appreciate your interest in the VA. If you have any further questions concerning this letter, you may contact Jacqueline Short of my staff at (202) 632-7426.

Sincerely,



Ms. Doloras Johnson
Director, VACO FOIA Service
Quality, Performance, and Risk (QPR)
Office of Information and Technology (OIT)



**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Board of Veterans' Appeals
Washington DC 20420**

In Reply Refer To:
19-03907-F

March 5, 2019

Mr. Heart Wood
American Oversight
Via Email foia@americanoversight.org

Dear Mr. Wood,

This is in response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request dated January 28, 2019, which was received by the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) on February 7, 2019. Your request sought all records reflecting costs reimbursed or paid directly by the BVA for any reimbursable expenses attributable to any political appointee for the timeframe of 12/21/2018 to 1/25/2019. You indicated that payments or reimbursements include any payments associated with travel (including the travel of any staff or security detail assigned to a political appointee), long-term housing, the cost of government transportation, individual airfare for government employees and/or their spouses, lodging, meals, per diem payments, rental vehicles, overtime payments, payments made via government-issued charge cards or travel cards, or any other reimbursable expenses.

We conducted a reasonable search within the BVA Financial Management Division for records that would be responsive to your request. Unfortunately, we were unable to identify or locate any responsive records.

If you are unsatisfied with this response, please know that as part of the 2007 FOIA amendments, the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) was created to offer mediation services. Similarly, as part of the FOIA Improvement Act of 2016, VA established a FOIA Public Liaison to offer mediation services. Both OGIS and the VA Public Liaison will assist in resolving disputes between FOIA requesters and VA as a non-exclusive alternative to litigation. Using OGIS or the VA FOIA Public Liaison does not affect your right to pursue litigation. You may contact OGIS or the VA Public Liaison in any of the following ways:

Office of Government Information Services	E-mail: ogis@nara.gov
National Archives and Records Administration	Telephone: 202-741-5770
Room 2510	Facsimile: 202-741-5769
8601 Adelphi Road	Toll-free: 1-877-684-6448
College Park, MD 20740-6001	

March 5, 2019

19-03907-F

VA FOIA Public Liaison
John Buck
Director, VA FOIA Service
810 Vermont Avenue, NW (005R1C)
Washington, DC 20420

E-mail: vacofoiaservice@va.gov
Telephone: 1-877-750-3642
Facsimile: 202-632-7581

While an adequate search was conducted, you may appeal by writing to the Chief Counsel, Information Law Group (024), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420. Your appeal must be received within 90 calendar days of the date of this letter. 5 U.S.C.A. § (a) 6 (A) (i) (III) (aa). Please state clearly why you disagree with the determination of this office.

Sincerely,

Ryan McDonald

for Margaret L. Peak
FOIA/Privacy Officer



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Benefits Administration
Washington DC 20420



February 27, 2019

Hart Wood
American Oversight
1030 15th Street, NW
Suite B255
Washington, DC 20005

FOIA #: 19-03901-F

Dear Mr. Wood,

This letter is in response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. 552, received in our office on February 7, 2019, in which you are seeking: All records reflecting costs reimbursed or paid directly by your agency for any reimbursable expenses attributable to any political appointee. Payments or reimbursements include any payments associated with travel (including the travel of any staff or security detail assigned to a political appointee), long-term housing, the cost of government transportation, individual airfare for government employees and/or their spouses, lodging, meals, per diem payments, rental vehicles, overtime payments, payments made via government-issued charge cards or travel cards, or any other reimbursable expenses. (Date Range for Record Search: 12/21/2018 To 1/25/2019)

The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) conducted a reasonable search for the records you have requested. After conducting a reasonable search, we have concluded that VBA does not have records responsive to your request. Courts have determined the reasonableness of an agency's search can depend on whether the agency properly determined where responsive records were likely to be found, and searched those locations. [See Jacoe v. IRS, No. 98-C-0466, 1999 WL 675322, at *4 (E.D. Wis. July 23, 1999) (recognizing that agency "diligently searched for the records requested in those places where [agency] expected they could be located")]. Record search inquires were made to the appropriate office(s). The search was conducted by utilizing the search criteria of [December 2017 for emails]. At the conclusion of the search, a "no records" response was provided for responsive records to your request.

This concludes our response. Your request was processed by the undersigned. You may appeal the determination made in this response to:

General Counsel (024)
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20420

If you should choose to make an appeal, your appeal must be postmarked no later than ninety (90) calendar days after the date of the adverse determination. It must clearly identify the determination being appealed and must include any assigned request number.

The appeal should include:

1. The name of the FOIA Officer
2. The address of the component
3. The date of the component's determination, if any
4. The precise subject matter of the appeal

If you choose to appeal only a portion of the determination, you must specify which part of the determination you are appealing. The appeal should include a copy of the request and VA's response, if any. The appeal should be marked "Freedom of Information Act Appeal".

In addition to filing an appeal with the Office of General Counsel regarding my determination, you may also seek assistance and/or dispute resolution services regarding your FOIA request from VA's FOIA Public Liaison and or Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) as provided below:

VA FOIA Public Liaison:

Email Address: vacofoiaservice

Phone Number: (877) 750-3642

Office of Government Information Services (OGIS)

Email: ogis@nara.gov

Fax: (202) 741-5769

Mailing address: Office of Government Information Services

National Archives and Records Administration

8601 Adelphi Road

College Park, MD 20740-6001

Thank you for your interest in the Department of Veterans Affairs. Customer service is very important to us. If you have questions regarding this letter, please contact me on (202) 632-8928.

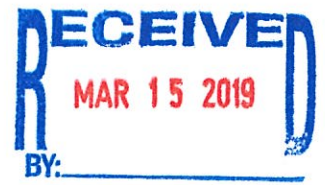
Sincerely yours,

Gwen Smith

Gwendolyn Smith
FOIA Officer



Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Inspector General
Washington, DC 20420



March 1, 2019

Austin Evers
1030 15th Street NW
Suite B255
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Evers:

This is in response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request dated January 28, 2018, to VA FOIA Service office, in which you asked for a copy of records as follows:

"All records reflecting costs reimbursed or paid directly by your agency for any reimbursable expenses attributable to any political appointee. Payments or reimbursements include any payments associated with travel (including the travel of any staff or security detail assigned to a political appointee), long-term housing, the cost of government transportation, individual airfare for government employees and/or their spouses, lodging, meals, per diem payments, rental vehicles, overtime payments, payments made via government-issued charge cards or travel cards, or any other reimbursable expenses."

You requested all records from "December 21, 2018, through January 25, 2018." Although your request stated you sought records from "December 21, 2018, through January 25, 2018," it was later clarified "January 25, 2018," should have read "January 25, 2019." You also requested the following:

"records describing the processing of this request, including records sufficient to identify search terms used and locations and custodians searched and any tracking sheets used to track the processing of this request. If your agency uses FOIA questionnaires or certifications completed by individual custodians or components to determine whether they possess responsive materials or to describe how they conducted searches, we also request any such records prepared in connection with the processing of this request."

Your request was forwarded to this office on February 4, 2019, and we assigned it FOIA Tracking Number 19-00198-FOIA. Please refer to this number whenever communicating with VA about your request.

Please be advised no responsive documents were found pertaining to portion of your request regarding the "reimbursable expenses attributable to any political appointee."

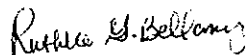
With regards to the portion of your request pertaining to the processing of your request, we have enclosed a copy of the requested records. However, we are withholding information protected under the deliberative process privilege, which permits withholding of all inter-agency or intra-agency information which would not be available by law to a party other than an agency in litigation with the agency, under FOIA Exemption 5, 5 U.S.C. § 552 (b)(5). Specifically, all frank communications between government officials.

We have also withheld all information which, if disclosed, would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of an individual's personal privacy under FOIA Exemption 6, 5 U.S.C. § 552 (b)(6). Specifically, names, job titles and other information which could reveal the identity of individuals mentioned in the records have been withheld. We do not find any public interest that outweighs the privacy interests of the individuals.

For your information, Congress excluded three discrete categories of law enforcement and national security records from the requirements of the FOIA. See 5 U.S.C. 552(c) (2006 & Supp. IV 2010). This response is limited to those records that are subject to the requirements of the FOIA. This is a standard notification that is given to all our requesters and should not be taken as an indication that excluded records do, or do not, exist.

You may appeal the determination made in this response to: Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Inspector General, Office of Counselor (50C), 810 Vermont Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20420, or by email to: VAOIGFOIA-Appeals@va.gov, or by fax to: (202) 495-5859. If you should choose to make an appeal, your appeal must be sent no later than ninety (90) calendar days after the date of this letter. Your appeal must include the assigned FOIA Tracking Number and any reason(s) why you believe the response was in error. If you choose to appeal only a portion of the determination, you must specify which part of the determination you are appealing. The appeal should include a copy of the request and VA's response. The appeal should be marked, or subject-titled, "Freedom of Information Act Appeal."

Sincerely,



Ruthlee G. Bellamy
Supervisory Government Information Specialist
VA OIG Release of Information Office

Enclosures

From: (b)(6)
To: (b)(6); (b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6)
Subject: RE: FOIA Request Tracking Number 19-00198-FOIA (DUE DATE: 2/22/19)
Date: Wednesday, February 20, 2019 10:36:08 AM

(b)(6)

FYI, per telephone conversation with (b)(6) earlier this morning, info was emailed to her as requested. There were no travel documents to report in Concur for Mr. Missal during the travel period of 12/21/18-1/25/19.

(b)(5);(b)(6)

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Wednesday, February 13, 2019 1:48 PM
To: (b)(6)@va.gov> (b)(6)@va.gov>
Cc: (b)(6)@va.gov>
Subject: FW: FOIA Request Tracking Number 19-00198-FOIA (DUE DATE: 2/22/19)

(b)(6)

Attached is a FOIA request for all documents associated with Mr. Missal's travel between 12/21/18 and 1/25/19 (the request actually indicates 1/25/18 but we have clarified that 18 was a typo and it should be 19).

(b)(5)

If you have any questions about the FOIA, please contact (b)(6) who is working this request for the FOIA office. I am also available to answer any questions you may have about the process.

All responsive documents should be provided to VA OIG FOIA-PA no later than 2/22/19.

Thank you!

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Office of Inspector General
Department of Veterans Affairs**

(b)(6)

(b)(6)@va.gov

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Wednesday, February 13, 2019 11:44 AM
To: (b)(6)@va.gov>
Subject: FOIA Request Tracking Number 19-00198-FOIA

Good Morning (b)(6)

Please find attached a FOIA request for your review. Please provide our office any documents you may have responsive to the request.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Inspector General
Release of Information Office (50CI)

From: (b)(6)
To: (b)(6)
Subject: FW: FOIA Request Tracking Number 19-00198-FOIA (DUE DATE: 2/22/19)
Date: Wednesday, February 20, 2019 7:14:11 AM
Attachments: (b)(5);(b)(6)

(b)(5);(b)(6)

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Thursday, February 14, 2019 4:32 PM
To: (b)(6)@va.gov>
Subject: RE: FOIA Request Tracking Number 19-00198-FOIA (DUE DATE: 2/22/19)

(b)(5);(

After looking again there actually is no travel during that date range. He traveled 12/10/18 and 1/28/19.

Thanks

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Thursday, February 14, 2019 4:27 PM
To: (b)(6)@va.gov>
Subject: FW: FOIA Request Tracking Number 19-00198-FOIA (DUE DATE: 2/22/19)

Sorry,
It is 12/21/18-1/25/19.....
Thanks (b)